

Madam Chair and members of the Committee,

My name is Rachel Markel. I am a K-5 Media Specialist at Portage Public Schools, and I'm here today speaking on behalf of the Michigan Association for Media in Education also known as MAME, Michigan's professional organization for school librarians.

Thank-you for the opportunity to speak to you on the important issue of third grade reading. Your hard fought and ongoing work to address such an important subject are greatly appreciated. Thank-you for directing your passion toward an issue that will impact students for the rest of their lives.

This bill includes extensive language on reading remediation. Today, I have come to bring awareness of another important reading resource not currently mentioned in the bill. School library media specialists play a vital role in influencing the development of reading in all of our students, but especially our youngest clients.

One of the most important roles of a media specialist is to foster a love of reading. Throughout my years in education I have received various thank-you messages from students and families. One of my most treasured is a hand-drawn card that says, "Thank-you Miss Markel for helping me to love books." I am sure that each Media Specialist has a treasured

collection of these mementos and/or memories. Media specialists know that if we can find the one book that creates a connection between a child and reading that we can affect his or her lifelong learning, growth and development.

This may sound warm and fuzzy and it is. However, numerous research studies affirm that cultivating positive feelings about reading creates a strong correlation to personal growth in reading. As an organization, MAME has compiled summary documentation that references these multiple studies.

Media specialists use multiple strategies to help develop reading appreciation. These include but are not limited to: reading aloud; using literature to provoke thoughtful discussions; giving book talks; using multiple tools to share about books they love and developing strong collection development policies that create libraries full of books that children want to read.

The importance of access to quality literature cannot be overstated. Stephen Krashen has compiled statistics that demonstrate, *“increasing access to books can not only help students enormously – it can even*

*mitigate the effects of poverty on school achievement and literacy development.”<sup>1</sup>*

There is a misconception that print has gone by the wayside and students are no longer interested. This could not be further from the truth. I have students who put their name on waiting lists for months for popular book titles. I also watched delightedly over the past week as students stopped by my windows to “window shop” and discuss the new books sitting there. I also have many students who have commented on their appreciation for having books they like to read.

I am not alone in my pursuit. Today’s elementary media specialist works to create collections that are engaging, bright, and filled with text and illustrations that appeal to children. In addition, many incorporate use of e-books, audiobooks, and even video books into said collections. Furthermore, they work to develop collections that help support curriculum, target needs and interests of their reflective populations and provide added supports for the work done by classroom teachers, reading specialists, and parent partners.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/articles/2011.\\_protecting\\_students\\_against\\_the\\_effects\\_of\\_poverty.pdf](http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/articles/2011._protecting_students_against_the_effects_of_poverty.pdf)

In addition to creating dynamic collections, media specialists work to make libraries and media centers exciting learning spaces. Media specialists do this through a variety of avenues. Most of us are not the bun wearing whisperers of the past but rather dynamic leaders who incorporate technology, digital literacy, book clubs, production studios, videoconferencing, and even makerspaces into our engaging and interactive media centers and libraries.

Unfortunately, having an elementary library with a certified media specialist has become a luxury for most of the students in our state. Elementary media specialists have especially continued to rapidly vanish over the past 10 years as district resources have become more and more scarce. Many school boards and superintendents have made the difficult decision to eliminate most, if not all of their elementary media specialists and in some cases have even eliminated library media centers.

Speaking from personal experience, my former district did not replace my position as the sole district media specialist when I left and after continued financial duress have now cut the media centers from being supported by three para-professionals to one para-professional with some assistance from high school students. Many of the schools in our state are

in similar circumstances. In fact, CEPI statistics from 2014 show that only approximately 35% of media centers were staffed at all, while less than 10% had a full time certified media specialist. Furthermore, even in the fortunate districts who have media specialists, budget and schedule restrictions often create gaps that keep a portion of students from receiving the full services of media specialists.

Unfortunately, as you know, Michigan reading achievement reflects these drastic cuts as Michigan was one of only 6 states where reading achievement declined from 2003-2013.

We applaud the hard work you have done with this bill to address some of these issues. We also know that resources continue to be scarce which places a difficult burden on decision making. However, we would ask that as you continue to look at ways to affect reading improvement for all of our students you would continue to increase your awareness of the role school library media centers and media specialists can play in impacting reading achievement. We feel these roles can be a vital part of the solution to ending reading decline.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.



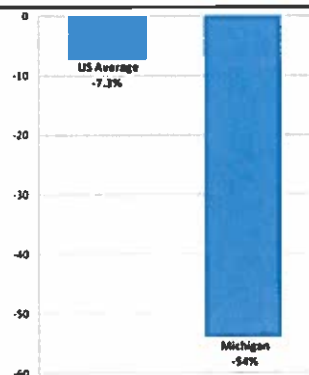


## Support for school libraries in Michigan has been declining....

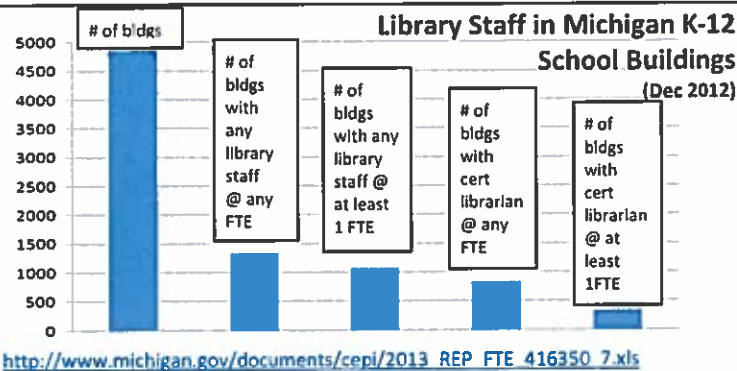
Percent change in School Librarians between 2000-2001 and 2010-2011

US Average = -7%

Michigan = -54%

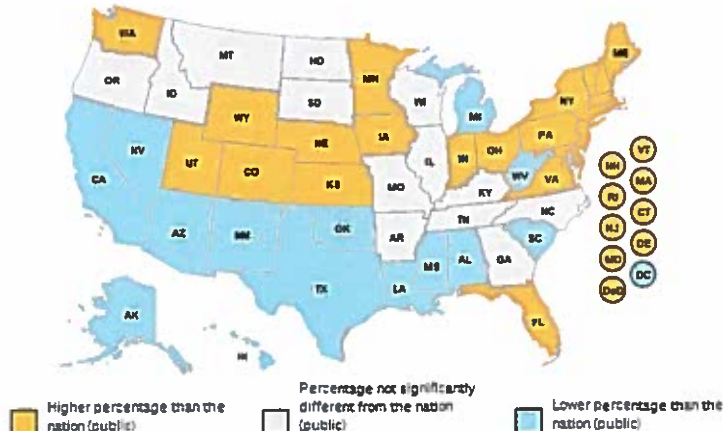


<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/ipedsreport.asp>



**...at the same time as the need for services provided by school libraries with certified librarians is increasing.**

Michigan 4th Grade 2013 NAEP Reading Scores are below the National Average.



Students in schools with certified librarians score higher on standardized achievement tests.



<http://www.lrs.org/data-tools/school-libraries/impact-studies/>  
 Michigan study:  
[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hal\\_lm\\_schlibstudy03\\_76626\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hal_lm_schlibstudy03_76626_7.pdf)

School Librarians and libraries play an important role in the transition to digital learning.



<http://all4ed.org/press/school-libraries-librarians-critical-for-transition-to-digital-learning-says-new-alliance-report/>  
[http://www.thedigitalshift.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/LibraryLeader-Infographic\\_12\\_5\\_13\\_F2aWeb.jpg](http://www.thedigitalshift.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/LibraryLeader-Infographic_12_5_13_F2aWeb.jpg)

School librarians play an important role in implementing the Michigan Academic Standards and preparing students for College and Career.



[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/SBE\\_Statement\\_on\\_School\\_Libraries\\_471838\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/SBE_Statement_on_School_Libraries_471838_7.pdf)

## Support our Students' Achievement: Support School Libraries!

# The 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Library Media Specialist

Today's School Library Media Specialists are certified teachers who empower students to be critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information.

School Library Media Specialists have many important roles in their schools:

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School Library Media Specialists are **teachers**. They work with students in the school library, in school labs, and in classrooms. They teach students how to research, how to be information literate, and how to be good digital citizens.

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School Library Media Specialists are **reading experts**. They provide equitable access to reading materials including electronic resources and eBooks. They build a culture of reading in their schools, teach reading skills, and match students to 'just right' books.

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School Library Media Specialists are **technology integrators**. They are most often technology leaders in their schools. They teach technology skills and work with teachers to integrate technology into the curriculum in a meaningful way.

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School Library Media Specialists are **resource locators**. They find resources (print, electronic, multimedia) to support curriculum and instruction. They curate resources for easy access by the school community.

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School Library Media Specialists are **collaborators**. They work with teachers to plan, instruct, and evaluate student learning. They partner with other organizations to provide high quality services and programs to the school community.

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School Library Media Specialists are **professional development providers**. They design and present professional development for teachers that supports the school improvement plan including technology integration.

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School Library Media Specialists are **leaders**. They are active on school committees, contribute to building initiatives, and are respected for their thoughts and ideas.

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School Library Media Specialists provide **equal access** to technology and resources to ALL students. Their services are especially important to at-risk students.

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Most importantly, School Library Media Specialists work with the entire school community and, as shown by multiple research studies, have a significant **positive impact on student achievement**. They provide critical services to ensure students are **ready for college and careers**.

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## Leverage School Librarians to Achieve 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Proficiency

The School Library is the hub of literacy learning and the School Librarian is central to creating a culture of reading and learning in the school. Certified School Librarians contribute to 3rd grade reading proficiency through both formal and informal teaching that occurs in the school library and classrooms. Certified School Librarians:

**Support learning to read and reading to learn** by developing a collection of quality informational and narrative texts and literature that addresses a broad range of reading levels and support national/state learning standards.

Teach students to seek, access, and use information independently

Teach students to compare and contrast texts on the same topic

Teach students the features of non-fiction text

Support students in sustained silent reading to develop focus and stamina

**Provide literacy instruction** for digital resources

Use inquiry for age-appropriate short and sustained research

Begin to teach about the quality and reliability of sources

**Create positive reading experiences through readers' advisory**

Get to know students, their reading preferences, their reading level and match them with books in all formats, including print, audio, and e-books

Teach students how to select their own reading materials to match their interest and needs

**Model fluency, phrasing and expression with read-alouds**

Build enjoyment of reading through read-alouds

Expose children to story conventions through read-alouds

Build vocabulary, promote complex thinking

Expose students to language structure not regularly heard in oral conversations

**Conduct themed reading programs and activities** which engage and create fun around the reading experience

Encourage reading of a wide variety of materials for information acquisition and for pleasure

Provide for family literacy opportunities

**Arrange author visits** that promote excitement in reading

Expose children to books/authors from different backgrounds than their own

Take the mystery out of how books are created

**Provide equal access** to parents and children that do not have the means or ability to purchase reading materials or visit a public library

**Conduct book clubs** (both enriched and remedial) where students read and share their reading experiences

Select excellent books from many genres, with protagonists of different genders and racial backgrounds

Expose children to narrative and informational texts they may not have selected on their own and introduce them to new worlds of reading enjoyment

**Support and collaborate with other teachers** working to improve student reading skills

Collaborate with classroom teachers on planning curriculum for early literacy

Collaborate to provide instructional materials aligned to the curriculum

Collaborate with classroom teachers, reading specialists/interventionists, administrators and parents to meet the needs of individual students

**Promote reading** to create lifelong readers and lifelong learners

For more information on the services and qualities of strong school library programs, see the Library of Michigan publication *School Library 21 (SL 21) Measurement Benchmarks for Michigan School Libraries for 21st Century Schools*.

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/lm\\_SL21\\_313134\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/lm_SL21_313134_7.pdf)

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## Research: Why Strong Library Programs Led by Certified Librarians are Best Practice

Multiple studies in over 20 states including Michigan show that school libraries with a full-time teaching school librarian have a high impact on increasing student reading achievement regardless of socio-economic or educational levels of the community.

*Library Research Service*

<http://www.lrs.org/data-tools/school-libraries/impact-studies>

Schools with librarians have 35 percent more fourth graders who score proficient or above than schools without librarians. Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) reading test scores rise with the extent to which the state's school library programs are headed by qualified school librarians. The relationship between school libraries and test scores cannot be explained away by other school or community conditions at any school level.

*The Impact of Michigan School Libraries on Academic Achievement: Kids Who Have Libraries Succeed.*

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hal\\_lm\\_schlibstudy03\\_76626\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hal_lm_schlibstudy03_76626_7.pdf)

Students who are economically disadvantaged, black, Hispanic, or have disabilities benefit proportionally more than general students from the presence of a full-time certified librarian.

*Latest Study: A Full-time School Librarian Makes a Critical Difference in Boosting Student Achievement*

<http://www.slj.com/2013/03/research/librarian-required-a-new-study-shows-that-a-full-time-school-librarian-makes-a-critical-difference-in-boosting-student-achievement/>

States that gained school librarians from 2004-05 to 2008-09 showed greater increases in 4th grade reading scores than did states that lost librarians during this time period.

*Change in School Librarian Staffing Linked with Change in CSAP Reading Performance, 2005 to 2011*

[http://www.lrs.org/documents/closer\\_look/CO4\\_2012\\_Closer\\_Look\\_Report.pdf](http://www.lrs.org/documents/closer_look/CO4_2012_Closer_Look_Report.pdf)

Reading test scores rise with the development of school library programs. The relationship between library program development and test scores is not explained away by other school or community conditions at the elementary level.

*Make the Connection: Quality School Library Media Programs Impact Academic Achievement in Iowa*

<http://www.iowaonline.org/vnews/display.v/ART/492b02e0d63b8>

Certified library media specialists and aides emerged as the most critical component of the library media program at all school levels. Well-staffed programs, especially those with full-time professional and support staff exerted a greater impact on student academic performance.

*Student Learning Through Wisconsin School Library Media Centers: Case Study Report*

<http://imt.dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/imt/pdf/finalcasestudy.pdf>

Eleventh grade ACT scores are highest when there is a high degree of true collaboration between library media specialists and classroom teachers in a wide spectrum of activities.

*Powerful Libraries Make Powerful learners: The Illinois Study*

<http://www.islma.org/pdf/ILStudy2.pdf>

In a study on the academic success of students in college, students who came from a high school with a library media program had much higher levels of achievement.

*College Success: High School Librarians Make the Difference*

<http://weloveschoollibraries.pbworks.com/f/Topsey%20Smalley1.pdf>

### **Infographics**

*School Libraries & Student Achievement*

[http://www.lrs.org/documents/school/school\\_library\\_impact.pdf](http://www.lrs.org/documents/school/school_library_impact.pdf)

*Strong School Libraries Build Strong Students*

[http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/advocacy/AASL\\_infographic\\_strongstudents-2013.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/advocacy/AASL_infographic_strongstudents-2013.pdf)

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